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STARK INTRODUCES CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH RIGHT TO HEALTH CARE

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA) announced his introduction of a proposed amendment to the US Constitution to guarantee health care as a right for every American. The amendment, H.J. Res. 30, is cosponsored by Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL) and 27 other House members.

“The health of every American is vital to their unalienable rights of ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,’” said Rep. Pete Stark. “To ensure these rights are fully enjoyed, we must be certain that every American can access quality health care – regardless of their income, race, education or job status. This Constitutional amendment is aimed at achieving this fundamental goal.”

Today, there are 45 million uninsured Americans, including 8 million children. Millions more are underinsured, excluded from certain types of health coverage or being quickly priced out of the health insurance market altogether. Additional disparities in access, treatment, and outcomes exist for people of color.

Facing skyrocketing costs, many employers are cutting benefits or dropping coverage for their employees, chipping away at the very foundation of health care insurance in the United States.

Proposed cuts in Medicaid now endanger coverage for the over 50 million Americans that currently rely on the program for medical care.

“We face a health care crisis where equal opportunity and basic fairness in our nation are at stake,” said Rep. Stark. “I’m frustrated, as many Americans are, that the President and Congress continue to ignore the problems we face. A Constitutional guarantee of health care for all will force Congress to take action to ensure that health coverage is there for all Americans.”

H.J. Res. 30 would amend the Constitution to say “all persons shall enjoy the right to health care of equal high quality.” It would require ratification by three-fourths of the States and so-called implementing legislation must be passed by Congress to ensure compliance with the amendment.

“I firmly believe that until we can guarantee that all people have the right to equal, high-quality health care through the Constitution, the interests of the people will continue to play second fiddle to the corporate bottom-line,” said Rep. Stark. “It’s time we put the health care of the people first. Our Constitution should be amended to promote that common interest.”